I: Good afternoon and thank you very much for taking the time to help me with my bachelor's thesis research paper.

I want to start by giving you some legal information regarding data protection.

The treatment of all the information collected during this interview is anonymous. The information will be stored under a pseudonym and will be used exclusively for my thesis study. I need you to sign the data consent within the protocols of the University that I'm serving my bachelor's theses. This interview has neither any benefit nor risk for you and you can leave it at any time.

I would like to ask for your consent to take pictures and record this conversation, as this would make it easier for me to analyze the data later. I will also be taking some small notes during the conversation. Is that okay with you?

R2: Yes, I give my consent.

I: This interview is a study about the perceptions of sustainability in the eyes of consumers, specifically within the food packaging industry. There are no right or wrong answers, so we ask you to be as honest and objective as you can. Again, rest assured that the content of the interview is anonymous and used only for my thesis paper.

Any questions before we start?

R2: No. So the point is you will ask me some questions and you expect me just some verbal answers.

I: Yes, so the first part of the interview will be open-ended questions and the second will be a visual survey.

R2: Okay.

I: So the first question is how would you personally define sustainability?

R2: So for me sustainability is connected to nature. So I would define sustainability is how are we using the natural resources in a more conscious way so that we don't deplete the natural resources and give as much as back to restore the natural balance or to maintain the benefits you are or to maintain the benefits you are getting from nature. Maybe in terms of wood, some trees or water or any natural resources that we get so we make this earth sustainable for us and the future generation.

I: Great. The second question to what extent would you say you are concerned about environmental issues and are you taking any actions in your daily routine to contribute to environmental sustainability?

R2: Yes I'm extremely concerned, worried about environmental issues and I feel we are depleting the natural resources at a faster pace making the earth uninhabitable for this as well as future generations. For my part I'm consciously making an effort to reduce the waste as much as possible from the household

perspective. I have cut down on the landfill that goes away from my house by using more biodegradable stuff as well as doing some more of composting and consuming the trash or waste as much as possible. I also try to make conscious efforts to buy products which are recyclable and also try to recycle the paper as much as I can and try to be as paperless as I can so that I don't leave any footprint or carbon footprint. The last thing is also conscious in terms of the carbon usage and making sure that I take good care of trees and around me wherever I can to help protect the natural footprint.

I: Great. So what do you care about when you buy packaged goods? Is there anything specific you pay attention to?

R2: I do pay attention to the nutritional value of whatever I buy. That's number one. Of course I look for value, the quality of the product. That's number two. Number three, I definitely look at the packaging which is more recyclable than one use thing. Try not to get into plastic as much as I can. I think those are the three main things I would look into.

I:Great. And along with that, what kind of packaged goods do you buy? Can you give me some examples of packed goods you've bought lately?

R2: Are you talking about, because packed goods can also include a lot of Amazon purchases, so is it related to food or is it related to any packed goods?

I: It could be anything.

R2:So from Amazon, we recently bought this electric burner. That could be used handily while we're doing our travels. We buy, I just bought yesterday actually, the filters for my AC and heater system as well as all the packaging that comes from the grocery store.

I: Great. And is there any packaging or can you think of any packaged goods that you may buy from grocery stores or local stores?

R2: Yeah, actually I just bought a big IKEA package, IKEA furniture, sorry, that came in a huge number of packages, almost 10 or 12, novel cardboard boxes. Bought a projector light, which again came into packages, as well as bought some cookies, bread and eggs, things like that, which are also packaged.

I: Perfect. Among the products that you mentioned, have you noticed if any of them were sustainable products?

R2: So for me, I look at recyclable. So like the egg carton, we make sure that we don't buy a plastic egg carton. So it is always cardboard, which can either be recycled or can be used in compost. So that was a conscious thing. Also, all the packaging that came from IKEA, for example, will be recycled. Many times Amazon has seen now that they have a stamp there which says that more than 50% of this material is from a recycled product itself. So those are the things that I look for.

I: Great. And how do you assess if a product is environmentally sustainable or green? What criteria do you use?

R2: I don't have a conscious criteria for that. As I said, I think I certainly look for products, at least the packaging, which is more recyclable. For example, I don't buy milk in the paper carton, because the town of Cary doesn't allow paper cartons to be recycled. It has to be thrown in the trash. So I make sure that I buy my almond milk in recyclable bottles. So that's definitely a conscious effort I make, to make sure that I can at least wash it and recycle it from that milk perspective, as well as the eggs. We make sure that we buy only eggs for certain things where the carton can be recyclable or compostable. We also buy, from my point of view, we make sure that, from a family perspective actually, that we don't use plastic bags from the grocery stores. We try to take our own things to reduce the drastic footprint of the purchasing that we do. Also, try to make sure that you don't make multiple trips, so that you're saving not only on the gas, but also reducing the carbon impact of it. So you make a conscious effort, you're just not popping into a grocery store, but you have a list of things, so that you limit the list of items that are required to be bought.

I: Okay, great. And the last open-ended question is, what elements of a product, if any, make you think it is more eco-friendly than another, regardless of whether you buy it or not?

R2: Made from packaged or recycled material, that is helpful. Made from natural resources or organic stuff, while making it. Made with use of less artificial sweeteners or antibiotics. Those kinds of stuff. So from a food consumption point of view, I try to be conscious in terms of eating as much as which is close to natural, organic, or close to the source of it. In terms of packaging, as much as it is recyclable, the max, as well as make the effort of recycling. And third is the waste that could be created. How can I compost it, so that it doesn't go to the landfill? I think it's a triangle of three.

I: Great. Okay, now I'm going to show you a series of photos of a variety of packaged goods. Please classify each of them based on which one out of the three you believe is the most sustainable. I ask that you provide a brief explanation of why you feel this way about each of the products. So let me share. Okay, are you able to see my screen?

R2: Yeah, okay.

I: Okay, so the first category is the same brand and product packaged in different packaging material. Which one out of these three do you feel is the most sustainable and why?

R2: I feel the third, tin. Tin is the most sustainable. Okay. Because both are the plastics, the first two things, with the full residue of it, which cannot be recycled. So it will go to the trash. So I would rather buy a tin, which I can recycle it.

I: Okay. Here's the second photo.

R2: Same thing, the middle part [aluminum can]. Okay. For the same reason, like last, it is recyclable for me. So I would go with that.

I: And the third one?

R2: Third one, in this case, it will be the bottle. Okay. Because the other one is a plastic, so I feel the bottles would be recycled.

I: Okay. The second category is the same packaging materials, but with different brands. This is the first series.

R2: None. Actually, I would go for, I don't think sustainable, but the middle one [Chobani]. I think I'm not fully reading the brand name. It is Chobani, I think.

I: Yep, I can make it bigger. Does that help?

R2: The Chobani one, so the Greek yogurt, which again has more natural living enzymes in it, which again has more natural living enzymes in it. So good for the health and also that's what I would prefer, sustainable. But from recycling, I think both, all three are same.

I: Okay. The next one?

R2: The middle one [Tropicana]. Okay. Which is a glass bottle, which is again recyclable. In the back, actually, I would look at how much percent of juice is it and how much it is, but that's more from a health perspective rather than sustainability perspective.

I: Okay. These three?

R2: None. All are same for me. They're all the same.

I: Out of these three?

R2: All three, I would say, because all three are glasses, in my opinion. That's the way the picture is looking. So all three are sustainable. Again, on the back, I would look at the ingredients and see how much are made from natural resources rather than processed one. So that will be another element to this.

I: Okay. Out of these three?

R2: No difference. All same for me.

I: Okay.

R2: All three are equal.

I: And this is different packaging and different brands.

R2: The first one, because of the glass bottle [On The Border].

I: Okay. Out of these?

R2: I would say the first one, because I can recycle the cartons after I finish eating the cereals.

I: Out of these three?

R2: This is the example I was giving from almond milk. Town of Cary doesn't have that middle one that is recyclable, so I will definitely go to the rightmost part of it [Volleman's Farm], which will be recyclable for me. And I believe it's the last one. I think the middle one for the recyclable part of it.

I: Okay, and this is the last series. Which one would you choose?

R2: The middle one [Rise], again because it is a tin can so I know I can recycle it. As I mentioned, in Cary I cannot recycle the right one [Chameleon] otherwise I like that one too.

I: Okay. And my last follow-up question would be... Sorry, one second. Do you perceive that there was any kind of greenwashing from any of the brands we have reviewed today? In case you're not familiar with greenwashing, it is defined as intentionally misleading or deceiving consumers with false claims about a firm's environmental practices and impact.

R2: I don't think so. I'm not aware. I didn't look at what the firm was telling, but rather what my preferences are, what prices are, and recyclable. I didn't pay attention to the firm's marketing in any of these cases.

I: Okay. That's all I have for you, so thank you so much for your time.

R2: Thank you.